



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Economic Development Commission

MEETING MINUTES

March 8, 2011 | 7:30 p.m.

Attendance

Setti D. Warren
Mayor

Commissioners: Daphne Collins (Chair), Philip Plottel (Vice Chair), Jack Leader (Secretary), Matthew Cuddy, Charles Eisenberg, Jane Ives, Peter Kai Jung Lew, Ronald Lipof, Joyce Moss, John Pears, Christopher Steele

Staff: Amanda Stout

Guests: Bill Renke, Anatol Zukerman

Absent: Robert Gifford, Darryl Settles

Candace Havens
Director
Planning & Development

Amanda Stout
Sr. Economic Development
Planner

Agenda Items

1. EDC Business

- Introductions – new members Ron Lipof and Joyce Moss introduced themselves to the Commission.

- Vote on January 11, 2011 Minutes – Collins had a small revision to the minutes regarding her formal request to Ald. Danberg and Ald. Linsky that one EDC member be appointed to the Austin Street JAPG. Motion to approve (8-0-2) (Lew, seconded by Plottel; Lipof and Moss abstained; Eisenberg arrived after vote)

- February 8, 2011 Minutes – Minutes from the Joint Meeting with the Long-Range Planning Committee were recorded by Shawna Sullivan of the City Clerk's Office.

Commissioners

Daphne Collins, Chair
Philip Plottel, Vice Chair
Jack Leader, Secretary

Matthew Cuddy
Charles Eisenberg
Robert Gifford
Jane Ives
Peter Kai Jung Lew
Ronald Lipof
Joyce Moss
John R.A. Pears
Darryl Settles
Christopher Steele

2. Annual Report

- In compliance with City Ordinance Article 5, Section 22-75 (g) (10), the EDC is required to submit an Annual Report to the Board of Aldermen. Although this has not been done for the past few years, Daphne Collins drafted an Annual Report and distributed it for comment at the February meeting. A revised version was delivered to Commissioners in advance of tonight's meeting for review. After brief discussion, motion to approve (11-0) (Eisenberg, seconded by Lew).

3. Strategy for a Business Improvement District (BID) in Newton Centre

- At the February Joint Meeting, Daphne Collins and Amanda Stout presented information on BIDs and a proposed strategy for exploring a BID in Newton Centre. The EDC discussed possible next steps.

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- Lew made a motion to form a BID Subcommittee to be charged with collecting data, making maps, contacting speakers, contacting property and business owners, reviewing a past and/or creating a new survey, and working in a strategic manner to present the BID concept to Newton Centre property owners. Motion to approve (11-0) (Lew, seconded by Steele). Many Commissioners are interested; at minimum BID Subcommittee will include Collins, Cuddy, and Steele. Amanda Stout will also assist the BID Subcommittee.

4. Update on “Firefighters’ Triangle” Study

- Philip Plottel said that a final report on the “Firefighters’ Triangle” study by the EDC Feasibility Analysis Working Group is not complete. Plottel said that Stephanie Gilman, the City’s Public Buildings Commissioner, is looking at both this site and another fire station site, developing an RFP for the sites, and assessing the needs of the City in making a decision about next steps on the fire stations.

5. Update on Financial Feasibility Analysis Model

- One outcome of the EDC Feasibility Analysis Working Group was the development of a robust Excel-based feasibility model that can provide a representation of financial feasibility for various development projects proposed for the City of Newton. Steele and Plottel said that the model is complete in the “beta” form. The EDC has prepared this model to provide a way to understand the financial impact of a development project on the City – including building permits, property taxes, public safety, schools, etc. Each time the model is used, it will need to be tweaked. The model is designed to help determine whether (1) a project is financially feasible from the City’s perspective (that is, the benefits to the City outweigh the risks) and (2) a project makes financial sense and can be completed by the developer.
- The EDC discussed the need for a good project to test the model and confirmed that the model should be applicable for both smaller-scale and larger-scale projects. Eisenberg said that the model is also intended to be used by Planning staff as part of their evaluation and recommendation to the Board of Aldermen.
- Motion to move the Beta model out of committee and to the full commission (11-0) (Steele, seconded by Lew). The Beta model is ready for review by all EDC members and by Planning staff, and feedback should be directed to Steele, Plottel, and Eisenberg. After the April EDC meeting, the model might be sent to two or three local real estate developers for their feedback.

6. Report on Mayor’s Mixed Use Task Force

- While the Mayor’s Mixed-Use Task Force wrapped up in September 2010, the Mixed-Use Element is now being considered by the Planning and Development Board, which will make a recommendation to the Board of Aldermen. On February 24, 2011, the P&D Board held a Public Workshop at the Senior Center. Joyce Moss gave a recap of the meeting, and noted that one purpose of the workshop was to discuss the implementation and role of public participation in mixed-use projects, including a “collaborative evaluation” process that would occur in the early stages of development review. The financial feasibility model might be one of a number of tools used to evaluate projects.
- The February 24th presentation and meeting summary are available on the City website. The next public meeting will be held on March 17th.
http://www.newtonma.gov/Planning/mixed_use_tf/mixed_use.htm

7. New Business

- With federal funding for the Community Development Block Grant program in jeopardy, Daphne Collins suggested that the EDC write a letter in support of the program, paying particular attention to the importance of the program to job creation and the economic health of Newton. The EDC agreed that Collins should draft a letter for commission review.
- Jack Leader will be one of the members of the Austin Street Joint Advisory Planning Group (JAPG) and will report updates at future EDC meetings.

8. Nominations and Elections of EDC Officers

- There was discussion about the scheduling options for elections. The EDC voted and unanimously approved that the nominations and election be held at tonight's meeting.
- Nominations for Chair
 - Matt Cuddy nominated Daphne Collins; Collins accepted the nomination.
 - Chuck Eisenberg nominated Phil Plottel; Plottel accepted the nomination.
 - John Pears nominated Chuck Eisenberg; Eisenberg declined the nomination.
- Nominations for Vice Chair
 - Chris Steele nominated Philp Plottel; Plottel declined the nomination.
 - Daphne Collins nominated Chris Steele; Steele accepted the nomination.
- Nominations for Secretary
 - Phil Plottel nominated Jack Leader; Leader accepted the nomination.
- Jack Leader temporarily assumed Chair from Collins. Paper ballots were distributed and all commissioners voted for an entire slate of nominees. Pears and Stout counted ballots; Leader announced the new slate of officers:
 - Daphne Collins was re-elected as Chair
 - Chris Steele was elected as Vice Chair
 - Jack Leader was re-elected as Secretary

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Stout, AICP

Sr. Economic Development Planner